

Muscatine County Residential Services, 2001, was accomplishing the return of seriously-mentally ill (SMI) persons from state hospitals to their 'home' county; challenge was great but we had skills and motivation. Daily county expense was at least 1/2 less than state--where was that figure when we needed it? State inspectors loved us but county supervisors sold Muscatine County Mental Health Services to the highest bidder-- ResCare at the time.

Administrator, Asst. Ad, Director of Nursing , and myself--Day Treatment Coordinator, were all RNs. My position required a master's degree as well. My evaluations for the required annual staffings were prepared with Nursing Diagnoses in Psychiatric Nursing. None of us were re-hired or even acknowledged. It was simply 'over.' The thought of privatization remains annoying, I admit!

My questions and my apprehension regarding this privatization--

Who will be watching for levels of experience and quality of education among caregiver staff? Will there be experienced nurses to work with mentally ill, among psychology majors fresh out of classes?

Who will be inspecting programs/ sites--yes, inspecting and reporting like the state used to do?

Who cares? Really, who cares about individuals who simply cannot keep up, day by day, without assistance from others? Who are these people who casually say, "Just get a job?"

When I think of all the volunteer board members who donate their time and experience for non-profit facilities, the thought of well-reimbursed board members on these private facilities seems counter-productive.

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